

2004 Dashe Cellars Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel

INTRODUCTION

The 2004 vintage was one that tested a winemaker's ability to make balanced, flavorful wine without excessively ripe flavors. I am happy to say that at Dashe Cellars, though very judicious selection in the vineyard and our ability to have our vineyards harvested exactly when needed, that we were able to attain the balance and elegance we want in our wines. Just at harvest, very hot days and warm nights pushed the grapes to ripen quickly, and it was necessary to test (and taste!) the grapes almost every day to make sure that they were not getting excessively ripe. We worked very closely with our vineyard crews to ensure that the grapes we received at the winery were not over 25 degrees Brix, so as not to produce over-ripe flavors. This classic Dry Creek Valley zinfandel has all of the black raspberry fruit and elegant texture that is the hallmark of Dry Creek Valley wines, with a balance and depth of flavor that we are proud to show in this difficult year.

PRODUCTION

We used our special custom-made gridded tanks to ferment the wines. These tanks, outfitted with stainless-steel grids that can be raised or lowered on top of the crushed grapes, allow us to submerge the cap of grape skins beneath the surface of the fermenting wine. We extract color, body, and complexity from the grapes, using these grids, without extracting too much of the drying tannins found in the seeds. The result are intense and complex wines that feel velvety and round on the tongue rather than harsh or tannic.

As is our tradition, we conduct the fermentation using only the natural yeast population on the grapes. During fermentation the temperature was allowed to get above 90° F, to aid in the extraction of color and flavor. At dryness, the wine was gently pressed in a membrane press and pumped to small, 60-gallon barrels.

The wine was aged for 14 months in a mixture of French oak and American oak barrels. Every three months we raked the wine out of barrel to clarify the wine and aid in its development. In our blending trials, we added small amounts of both petite syrah (for structure and aging potential) and carignane (for a round texture and lovely raspberry fruit) in the wine.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Varietals: 93% Zinfandel, 5% Petite Sirah, 2% Carignane
Appellation: Dry Creek Valley
Sonoma County
Alcohol: 14.5 % by vol.
Time in oak: 14 months
Oak: 30% French & 70% American; 18% new

Production: 3769 cases, 750mL
120 cases, 375mL
Release date: May 15, 2006
Sugg. retail price: \$22.00 bottle, 750mL
\$12.00 bottle, 375mL

Optimum time for consumption: 2006-2012

TASTING NOTES

Color: Dark red-black.
Aroma: Intense black raspberry, chocolate, dusty/mineral, lavender, clove, black pepper.
Taste: Plum, cassis, black raspberry fruit, chocolate and vanilla, clove spice, thick and velvety texture on the mid-palate, long sweet finish of black raspberry fruit, sweet chocolate and spice.